
**A
BRIEF
HISTORY**

OF THE

**MILES
PLATTING
MISSION.**

FOUNDED 1884.

For the Saving of Men and God's Glory.

Miles Platting Mission.

A BRIEF HISTORY IN CONNECTION WITH
THE ABOVE MISSION,

*From the Summer of 1884 to the
Year ending 1898,*

BY ONE OF ITS MEMBERS.

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PREFACE.

It is with regret that the writer has to touch upon a matter in connection with the history of the Miles Platting Mission, but it is necessary that it should be introduced to show why the Mission was founded. Our friends, the members of the Salvation Army (the writer hopes), will pardon its introduction on account of its necessity, as I think after fourteen years, the feelings of pain and irritation which was then caused, will have somewhat calmed down. There is room for all—the world's harvest is great, but the labourers are few. There is much more that might be written in connection with the dispute; as most of you know the officers are removed about every six months, the officer prior to the dispute told one of our bandsmen that he had orders to break up the Band, but he could not find in his heart to destroy an auxiliary that was so powerful for good in the district, but he said they are going to send one that will do; asked why they wanted to break up the Band, he said he could not tell. That officer went away, and one did come, and he carried out his orders with a vengeance.

A Brief History of the
MILES PLATTING MISSION.

IT was in July of 1884 that the members of the Brass Band in connection with the Salvation Army, Manchester, IV. Corps, was asked by the secretary of the Holland Street Ragged School to lead their procession in connection with the Lancashire and Cheshire Band of Hope Union. Twelve months prior they led the procession with consent of the officers, and naturally they thought it would be all right again, so of course consented. When they told the officers their intention they refused to let them go. When asked the reason of refusing them permission to go, the officers told them that the major of the Lancashire district would not allow them, so they wrote to the major informing him that the procession was on a Saturday afternoon, and that there was no meeting in connection with the Army that required their services. It was in their own time, and that they would be back in time for the open-air service of the Army. The reply to this letter was, that if they played for

the Ragged School they would not be allowed to play for the Army again. So they wrote to the General, but he replied that he placed every confidence in the major, and of course he could not see his way clear to interfere.

The bandsmen held a meeting to consider what to do, and they decided, with only one dissentient, to play for the Ragged School, the result was that they were practically turned away.

Yet the bandsmen still hoped that something would be done to reinstate them. The major was due the Tuesday following at the Manchester IV. Corps to conduct a holiness meeting, and of course great expectation was raised that he would listen to the men and see if something could not be done to clear the difficulty, but mark the disappointment of the men when, after the meeting, they begged of him to listen to them and try to clear the difficulty, when he walked deliberately out of the meeting and would not listen to them under any consideration. (The writer was present at the meeting, and seeing the manner he treated them, went away in disgust).

As early as possible the men held a meeting to see what course to take. They had done their best. They were very reluctant to leave the Army, but what else could they do. They would not be allowed to take part in the service, and they were

men that were burning with a desire to do something for the Glory of God. They felt they could not sit idle. Some of them had known what sin was, they had indulged in it to a large extent, and the change they had realised from the power of sin to saving grace made them think what was to become of them if they ceased to be active workers. I remember one who had been a terrible character. Yea, he was so bad that no one would hardly employ him. He was glad to get a situation at ten shillings per week, simply to regain his character (and had a wife and family depending on him). He spoke at the meeting, saying that he was very much afraid that if he ceased to be an active worker he might fall into his old habits again.

The result of the meeting was that they decided to stick together and form a mission. When this became known, about forty members of the Army joined the band to form the mission. Some of our critics might say here, why did they take the instruments with them? Surely they could have left them behind, and it would have been more honourable. Well, the answer to the charge is this—who had more right to them than the public; it was a public duty that the men were turned away for. The men had worked hard for the instruments. I remember when they had got them (on credit), and

they were only second-hand. One Christmas they had played from the dawn of Christmas morn to the noon of Christmas Day, to help to pay for them. One of the men told me that he had to take off his stocking on account of his feet bleeding so with the constant tramping about from one place to another. Some of the parents of the children who walk at the Band of Hope Procession had helped to contribute to them, and the men were determined that the public should have the benefit of them ; and right well has that decision been kept, because they were so worn out with constant playing that they have been replaced with an entire new set, and silver-plated at that. So nobly did the public respond to the appeal for new instruments, that when all was balanced up, there was a clear surplus of eleven pounds.

Well, the Mission was founded. Mr. Mark Smalley was appointed president, and like many more earnest men they took to the streets for their work. I remember an aged man, about 60 years of age, standing round the open air ring listening to the speakers, he had spent most of his time in riotous living, he was so convinced of his sins that he then and there found mercy, and a great many more also found mercy to their souls ; the difficulty was that many people

were so convinced at the various open-air services that the Mission people had to beg of some friends the use of their houses, so that the people could be shown the way to the Cross. There is in Lowe Street, Miles Platting, a small room, that the Temperance Party use on a Sunday, but in the week it was partly closed; the Mission people rented the room for the nights it was at liberty, and much work was done here.

On the Sundays they rented the Walker Street Temperance Hall, and it used to be packed, the result was that a great many people was added to the mission.

Well, the officials began to think what they must do as winter was approaching. They were aware it would be a difficult matter to continue open-air work in the winter, also they were never sure of the rooms that they rented, also they wanted to retain the many souls who had been so blessed by their labours. On looking round for a suitable hall, they came across the one over the Co-operative Stores, and on enquiry they found that the co-operative people would only be too glad to let it them, so they took possession at the rent of thirty shillings per week. Well, the work was good outside, but in this hall the miracles of saving grace that the labours of the Mission was blessed with

was something wonderful. Here is one out of a great many :—There was a man that lived in a great garret over a workshop—he and his two children ; they had lived there some time (there was no mother). He was attracted by the band, and followed them to the hall, and when the invitation was given he was one of the first to fall on his knees and ask for the Lord to save his soul, he went home (I should say to the garrett), and told his children where he had been, and that he was going to be a good father to them ; he would not get drunk again, nor swear at them any more. You can understand the feelings of the children when they heard his statement ; it was said that he was the worst character that walked Rochdale Road ; well, it was not long before he removed to a comfortable cottage. It would take some time to describe all the scenes that took place in that Hall. Here is another, a man that had served over twenty-six years in prison came to the Penitent form and stood for some time, but, unfortunately for him, his old habits got the better of him, and he fell away. But here is another that is with us at the present time, a drunken mother, that came in one Sunday, she had on one clog and one boot, I don't think the pair would have brought threepence at a marine stores. When the prayer

meeting commenced she was one of the first to come to the Penitent form, her husband soon followed her, and a great change was soon noticed by the neighbours, here is her testimony some time after we had left the Co-operative Hall. I never pass the Co-operative Stores but what I look at the hall above ; it brings to my mind the condition I was in when I entered that room. Oh what a change ! That room has pleasant memories for me. Such was the character of a great many of them that entered that room, and sought mercy to their souls. I have seen a meeting upstairs and an overflow meeting outside, both being conducted with great spirit. Well, we laboured in this room for about two years, and our numbers so increased that the officials began to look for larger premises. It was not long before we were successful in securing the old St. George's School, Oldham Road, which had been closed for a considerable time. The difficulty that presented itself to the officials was the want of forms, seating accommodation, &c. The Co-operative Hall was seated, but there was practically nothing in this hall, only lumber and dirt, and plenty of it, too, but willing hands soon got to work, and the lumber and dirt soon disappeared. We furnished the room, which soon ran up a bill of over one hundred pounds, but the

public of Miles Platting knew the Mission, and it was not long before that debt was wiped out.

The work of persuading the people to see to their souls' salvation soon commenced, the same scenes of activity and success which characterised the work in the Co-operative Hall took place here, only on a larger scale, many of the worst characters laying claim to a reformation of their lives through the agency of the Mission. Here are a few of them :— There was a couple living in a back yard near the Mission after a night's debauchery and drunkenness they were attracted by the band, and followed them to their hall, where they both came to the Cross. When they went home neither of them knew how to pray or had forgotten how, but they went on their knees. The wife said to the husband, now you pray. He said he did not know what to say, and he asked the wife to try. Memory soon asserted itself, and that blessed little hymn which mothers try to instil into the minds of the young came back again with all its force, and she began to repeat it : Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, &c. The husband some time after was killed whilst following his employment, but the wife remains to-day a praying woman.

The Bible and Hymn Book take the place of the beer jug and cards : these are the characters that

the Mission has been successful with. Oh! the power of a brass band for mission work, especially when its members are Christian men. Such has been the endeavour of the officials only to have men that will play with singleness of purpose to God's glory. Here is a case. I remember once hearing an old man giving his testimony (before we were a mission) who had sunk very low in sin, so low that he thought life a terrible burden—(he was standing on Rochdale Road Bridge). Whilst in this frame of mind, Satan put it into his heart to destroy himself, and he was wondering what way to do it, when his attention was drawn to some sound in the distance. Rivetted to the spot, it drew nearer and nearer, until the strains of a brass band reached him. He started to follow the sound, when he soon came across the band, and he followed them to their hall. The result was he came to the Cross, and found pardon—a miracle of saving grace. I knew another man who had some bother with the publican. The man was very far gone in drink, and the publican refused to serve him, telling him he had had enough already. He came out of the beerhouse, was attracted by the Mission, and like many more came to the Cross and found mercy. There was a female member of the Mission who had been a terrible character, but had found mercy.

She was subjected to much abuse from her husband. He constantly starved her and the children. Many had been the Sundays she had tasted the fresh air of Queen's Park for her dinner ; the husband had given to the publicans her and the children's share. Our President going home from a morning service happened to call, as he was passing, when, who should he see but the husband. Now John, says our President, you had better come to the meeting this afternoon, and John, to get rid of him, promised, but John was not at the meeting. Our President called again during the day, and going up to John, said, Aren't you going to act the man you promised this morning? Now John prided himself on his word, so he hung down his head with shame, but he said he would fulfil his promise by coming to the evening service. He did come, with this result, that he came to the Cross and found mercy (a perfect miracle of saving grace). It is not so long since John died, and went home to Heaven. My word, it was a funeral, so much had he endeared himself to all who knew him by his consistent living, that a great many people lined the way to the cemetery to show their mark of respect to his memory. I have now to chronicle one of those very sad stories that it seems most places of worship are beset with at some

time in their history. I suppose it did not do for the evil one to let us alone, he was losing some of his best servants, and this is how it came about. Our President was very anxious that the Mission should be on a very firm basis, we had no Trustees nor any Trust Deed, we had been content to go on in our own sweet way, but our property was increasing, and he thought it wise that it should be invested in Trustees, so a meeting was held, and it was decided to form a Trust. It was placed in the hands of a gentleman to do, and to all intents and purposes we thought it had been done ; soon after this our much beloved President died, oh what a loss, no one could estimate it at the time, and the funeral I shall never forget ; he lived in Rochdale Road, and from Churnet Street to the cemetery was lined with people, in the cemetery you could have almost walked on their heads, so dense was the throng, many were the hearts that ached when the minister said dust to dust, ashes to ashes ; and the once fine manly figure that used to be at the head of our procession would be seen no more. We all left that grave side with great regret. Such was the funeral of our President, and to many minds his loss was the death knell of the Mission. Soon after a Meeting was called to elect a President. One was chosen from our own people, and he held

office for about fifteen months, but, to use his own language, he felt most unfitted for it, so he gave up the position. It was a difficult office to fill, or, in other words, Mr. Smalley was a hard man to follow. Well, we thought it the best course to seek a President outside the Mission. A gentleman in the name of Mr. S. Cockerill was waited upon, and he consented to be nominated. Soon after he was unanimously elected to the chair. Prior to his election there was a growing feeling among some of the members that we had not been dealt with rightly with the trust deed. Some said there was no deed, others said there was. The gentleman who had the matter in hand, when asked to produce it, made all sorts of excuses. The result was a deal of bother in the place, and the losing of some members.

Our president took the matter up and did his best to obtain the deed, but finally he thought it wise to let it slide for the time being, intending at some future time to have a new one. Our troubles were not ended yet, the hall that we worshipped in was put into the market, with the result that a manufacturer bought it, and of course we had to go, he wanted it for his own business purposes. Our lot had fallen on evil days, we found it very difficult to find a place to suit us ;

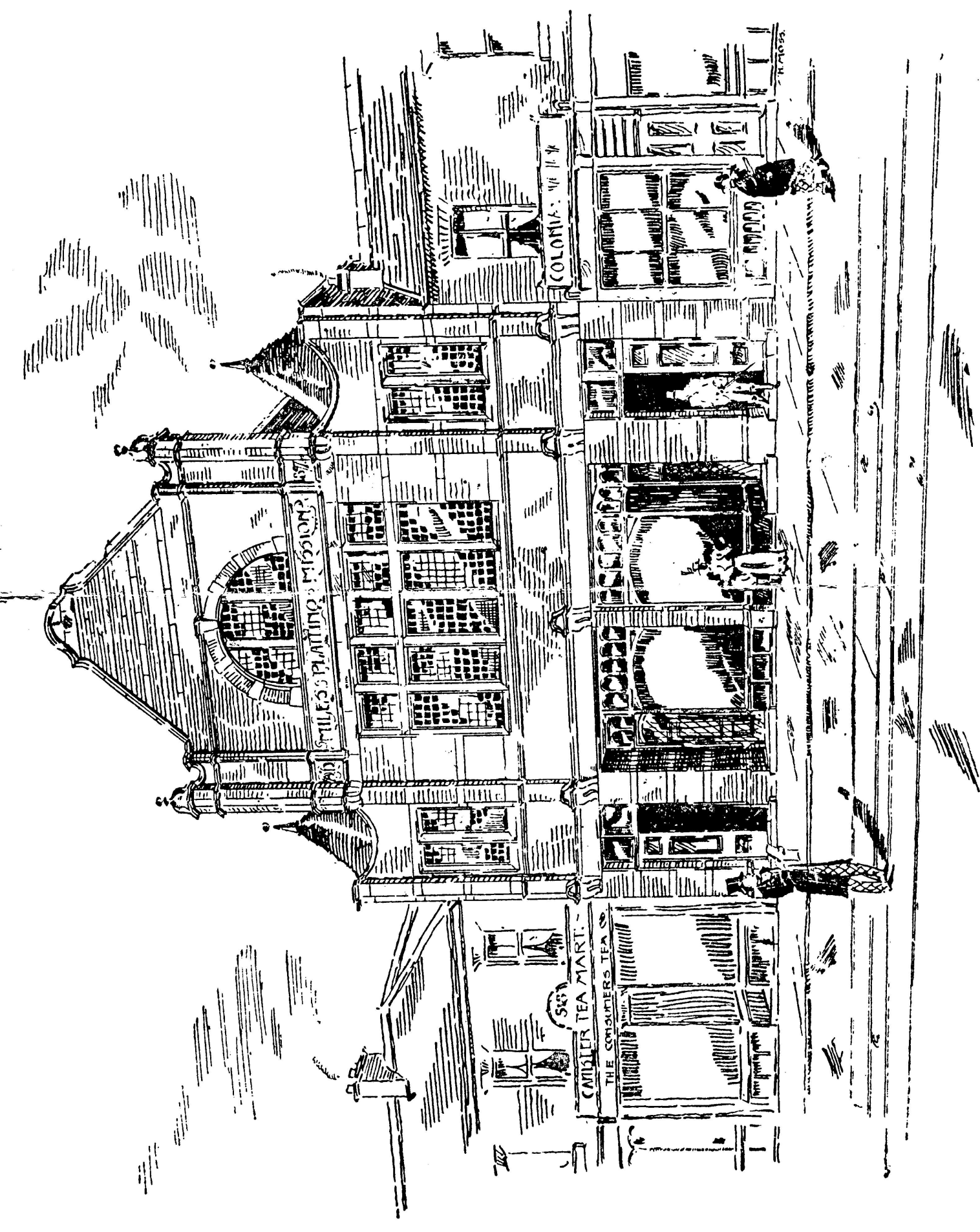
however, we managed to come to terms with a Mr. Riley, who had a place in Berkshire Street, that he had for a flannelette factory, but had removed to larger premises. We took possession and commenced in real earnest, there was plenty of rubbish to clear away, but we soon made it habitable. Our difficulty over the deed was beginning to die away, and we set to in real earnest for the salvation of the people; soon the work of saving souls commenced, and many miracles of saving grace have been produced in the Berkshire Street Hall.

There was one who constantly listened to us in the open air, a terrible character, in fact, he has told me that he has gone through hundreds of pounds, all through drink. He followed us to the hall, and gave his heart to God. He is now a respectable man, with a good business in Oldham Road.

There is another (only a little chap), but Oldham Road used to be too small for him at one time. He came to the Mission Hall. and gave his heart to God, and now it is a treat to hear his testimony. It would take me some time to describe all the scenes of conversion that took place in this hall. Scores of people, some drunkards, some respectable, all sorts and all kinds of characters have been blessed by our labours in this hall. Our President

soon after we took possession of this hall, recognised the inconvenience we were subject to, and he commenced a Tract Society, the profits of which were to go towards a building fund. It has now been in existence for some years, and it has brought a nice amount towards the new building. We had only been worshipping in this hall about four years when another change took place. Our president's health began to fail him, and the distance he lived from the hall compelled him to resign his position. Another was chosen from our own midst, and right nobly have the members supported him. It was soon after his election that the hall we worshipped in was offered to us for sale, and we were given to understand that if we declined the offer it would be put in the market. This made us wake up ; we did not want a repetition of the Oldham Road affair, so we determined to see if we could not have a building of our own. There was a piece of land temporarily tenanted on Oldham Road that would just suit us. A deputation was appointed to wait upon the owner. He offered it for sale clear, or on the ground rent system. We chose the latter. Our balance-sheet for the building fund then was only £84. We employed an architect to draw out plans ; also tenders were invited from builders. One was accepted for over £2,000 ; and mark you,

we had only the above amount to commence with. When all the particulars were ready, a meeting was called of all the members, and they took the matter up with great earnestness. The sum of £84 was soon made at this meeting into nearly £200. Well, the building was commenced, the payment was divided into five separate instalments, and at the third payment, which was then near £2,000, close on £600 had been subscribed by our own individual efforts. When the building is ready for opening, we expect that sum will be considerably augmented, and all this has been done in about eighteen months, in a hall only capable of seating about 250 people. Our work is of a progressive character. We are determined that the people of Miles Platting shall hear the Gospel, and that the district shall be the better through the Miles Platting Mission. When our new hall is ready it will seat, in the large room about 650, in the small room about 350, besides class rooms. Before closing this history I must say that the united efforts of our solicitor (J. C. Needham, Esq.) and our architect (F. W. Dixon, Esq.) in connection with our new building scheme deserves the highest praise, for right nobly have they helped us.



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